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ABSTRACT

Several systematic approaches to problem-solving hold promise for urban education. These include proactive leadership, third parties as problem solvers, citizen involvement, and the decision seminar. Proactive leadership is required to assure educational opportunity constructed upon the companion principles of equity and quality. One example of proactive leadership is the establishment of third-party citizen problem-solving groups. Such citizens groups in some respects negotiate the public interest among boards of education, school employees, students, parents, citizens, the state and even federal interests. To solve problems, third parties employ the strategies of leading, convening, accessing, mediating, linking, proxying, catalyzing, reporting, and implementing. The decision seminar is a disciplined structure for the analysis of problems and the projection of alternatives. Typical goals are to improve problem-solving, to supplement the knowledge and experience of participants, to construct an analytical framework through which participants can integrate problems, and to establish information-gathering and evaluation systems. The seminar employs the classic elements of the problem-solving process. (Author/JM)

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SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES TO THE MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF URBAN EDUCATION

by

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to the

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sponsored by

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"Systematic Approaches to the Management and Governance of Urban Education"

Prelude

May I on behalf of the American professional community bid you welcome. During recent days, you have been privileged to meet educational leaders, to visit several cities in Canada and the United States and to assemble here in this beautiful setting for summation and the projection of the educational implications based upon learnings of these past several weeks. Your visit to this continent and the attendant opportunities it has provided may stimulate you to reflect further and seek modifications in educational direction and policy within your country or your institution. Of significance to Americans, however, is the meaning of your observations for educational policy in Canada and the United States. We are searching as you may have discovered for insights relative to our own responsibilities.

May I congratulate the planners, designers, and architects of this assembly and the program of the past several weeks. It is an event of bicentennial significance indeed.

In the preparation of my remarks I have been sensitive to the diversity represented in this audience. There is the inter-nation dimension with the consequent language variations. There is the intra-nation dimension with different levels of representation within and among the administrative and policy hierarchies. There is the intensity of urbanization dimension reflected in the varieties, magnitudes, and scopes of educational interests present.

As I begin my presentation I am aware too of what must be near saturation of information, observation, dialogue, conversation, and discussion. You have been introduced to new people and new faces. You have visited new locations. You have encountered new ideas, new problems and they blend undoubtedly into a particularly appealing set of new frustrations. The problem of assimilating what

you have encountered is both attractive and intimidating. You must wonder whether or not you have seen and heard enough to grasp a matter fully and intellectually. You must be concerned about whether you have seen or heard enough to understand the relevant policies, procedures, practices, and programs that have meaning vis-a-vis a particular interest. You may need to make certain that you have sensed and internalized the important contextual properties of urban settings to detect those attributes which either set them apart or make them similar to others elsewhere. Yours must be a delightful state of fresh insight and traumatizing uncertainty.

INTRODUCTION

For the past several years it has been my privilege as an academician to work intensively on educational problems in field settings (especially San Francisco, Detroit, St. Louis and Columbus).[1] I have been the beneficiary of two environments, campus and field, each rich in its own way. The observations that I share with you today are the product (in large measure) of the sustained engagement of conceptions and formulations generated in academic settings with the problems and issues confronted by educators and citizens in large American cities. My experience has included simultaneously executive responsibility with powerful and influential citizens groups and the performance of the usual duties attendant to an university academic position. As I have noted on many occasions, I had the best of two worlds and at times the frustrations that accompany each.[2]

The interface of perspectives from the academic setting with the unyielding problems of the cities has been close to but not the same as a field experiment, test or trial. Nor has it been a disciplined exercise in knowledge utilization, a research task, or a focused analysis of the celebrated theory/practice gap. As a citizen's group staff member, I was a practitioner of sorts in an arena for which there were few guidelines, only limited theory, and no practice based literature. Immersion in the problems and issues of the field, sustained association with thoughtful citizens and professional educators, executive responsibility of a unique sort, and umbilical ties to academic colleagues at a major university -- each and in combination -- have given substance and contour to this presentation.

Several theses will be developed each congenial to public problem solving. Proactive leadership, third parties as problem solvers, citizen involvement and the decision seminar are the foci of much of the discussion. They are introduced

and reviewed independently but each is essential to the other in a concerted effort to improve the governance and management of urban education.

ASSUMPTIONS AND PREMISES

Several assumptions and/or premises are essential to understanding the discourse:

(a) The complexity which surrounds problems (especially contemporary urban problems) is so severe that their solution is dependent upon a level of public learning and public understanding not yet achieved nor at present achievable.

The frustrations of public officials are escalating as they search for answers to public questions. And so are those of citizens. It is little wonder that the ordinary citizen exhibits unfriendliness and hostility toward basic institutions when those institutions appear to be so involved and complicated. It is not just a question of remoteness and insularity as opposed to openness or approachableness. It is a matter of complexity.[3] School systems in the large cities for example are so complex that they baffle their clients, the students. They are confusing to parents, and to friendly and unfriendly citizens. What is more they are baffling, even intimidating to their governors and managers and to the thousands of persons they employ.

Frustrations are shared by insiders and outsiders alike and are similarly based; for example, not knowing where or by whom decisions are based; mysticism surrounding accountability; coexisting and overlapping authority systems; uncertainty about how resources are aggregated and allocated; inertia; invisibility or nonexistence of focus on the interests of children and youth.

There is nothing in place nor very little on the horizon that promises to improve on this circumstance. Consequently the deterioration of urban education seems unlikely to diminsh either in rate or extent.

(b) The need for public learning (elevation of the citizenry's awareness and understanding of its problems) is itself growing at an exponential rate and exceeds the requirements of the political community as we have known those requirements in the past.

The vitality of a democratic society is sustained by high interest in and engagement with the problems of its members. It is increasingly essential that the citizenry's general level of knowledge and information be improved. Amitai Etzioni has taken note of the fact that the knowledge societal units command significantly affects their collective action. Furthermore, societal units are internally differentiated -- what one subunit may know, another often does not. In particular he observes that the knowledge available to expert and central units of an organization, institution, or government is not available to other members.[4]

Public learning is complicated further by the knowledge and information obsolescence problems and the need for disposal of obsolete data. Knowledge and information issues within institutions and between institutions and their societies are particularly serious when the contours of public problems are in flux and changing underneath their custodians without organized and interpretable feedback.

(c) The technology for achieving public learning objectives is developed but so far has escaped effective organizational and structural forms.

As is true in so many instances, the world has produced remarkable capabilities for improving the human condition but we have failed to perfect the political forms which make the benefits available to larger and larger numbers.

> The tragedy of the decade of the 70's can be written now, simply and without fanfare or embellishment. As a nation, the United States has not discovered the solutions to its vexing social and educational problems despite the fact that the resources, the energies, the capabilities are everywhere. We will spend more,

> we will try harder but our failures will be even more grandiose than those of the past. But it need not be so. We are saturated with capacity. Our energy and talent reservoir literally knows no bounds, yet we have failed to discover how we can address that energy and talent to problem solving. Our vision is limited and unnecessarily constrained.[5]

The communications technology is rapidly developing and its access is relatively open, especially in the United States and Canada. The satellites provide us with nearly umlimited worldwide communications capability that lends itself to both macro and micro applications. These technical capabilities can be applied to the problems of public learning.

(d) Theory exists (including the incorporation of technology) to apply to the problems of public learning especially as formulated in the decision seminar and the social planetarium.

The decision seminar is a tool.[6] It is an instrument to apply to problem solving and a mechanism through which learning (including public learning) can be achieved. It is disciplined and in its most idealized form incorporates advanced forms of information storage, retrieval, and sharing. Harold Lasswell has devoted much of his work to the development of the seminar's conceptual base. He and his colleagues have tested the seminar's properties in numerous field contexts emphasizing focused and targeted problem solving objectives at times, public learning objectives on other occasions.[7] Most agree that the theory of the seminar has potential and warrants repeated applications in many social as well as institutional contexts.

The social planetarium is an advanced and complex concept incorporating the most far-reaching uses of communications and computer technology (storage, retrieval and dissemination) within single and/or linked locations. There are no social planetaria now, nor are there any in early prospect. Their development

will depend in large measure on the combined public recognitions of the extraordinary need for public awareness and public learning and the extension of understanding among key public figures of the potential of the planetarium concept.

(e) The extension and improvement of social institutions (including education) is dependent upon an emergent, proactive, expanding cadre of lay and professional leaders who command both theoretically sound and practical tools through which to achieve public awareness and public learning.

The current, in place, governmental and institutional forms in the United States do not possess broadly shared knowledge within them about how to reduce the society's learning deficits about itself nor do we have leaders prepared to achieve that objective.[8] Seminars of this sort are directed toward that end, at least in part. The widespread and enlarging conversations about a learning society are not the same as much needed conversations about public learning. One is the handmaiden of the other. But they are not the same.

The public learning objective is directed toward better understanding of the public's problems. John Dewey argued that "the essential need. . . is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is <u>the</u> problem of the public."[9] Dewey's observation was made in 1926 well in advance of cable television, satellites, and computers. He argued for discussion and debate, but informed discussion and debate, constructed upon facts and information. The goal of public learning is to enjoy an aware, informed, intelligent public, discerning, cautious of demogogery, but consensus producing.

A learning society is a society comprised of learners, ideally life-long learners. Such a society would indeed make possible public learning, but not by definition at least, guarantee it. Thus, we need in our time and from this point forward an ever-expanding cadre of leaders, devoted to the objective of

public learning, proactive in its regard, and utilizing theoretical perspectives about how to achieve public learning.

(f) Citizens involved in public problem solving can enter a new era of public effectiveness or drift into disenchantment and disarray.

Citizen involvement faces a period of transition. It is entering a new phase conditioned and informed by experiences of the past decade. Citizen involvement has been occurring (even required by public policy) at all levels. Yet citizen involvement in public policy and decision making has yet to achieve the expectations of its advocates. There is both promise and peril in its future.

SEARCH FOR CONCEPTS AND STRUCTURES CONGENIAL TO PROBLEM SOLVING

Context

The appearance, if not the fact, of large educational institutions is that they are ungovernable and unmanageable. The New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago public school systems for example are sprawling masses of buildings, programs, budgets, personnel, governors and clients.

There is an impotency condition that overlays, surrounds, and permeates large, bureaucratic educational systems. Power, control and influence are so incredibly diffuse, layered, and confused that fundamental, pedagogical policies and decisions are either anemic, unmade, or the product of default.

The large systems are often charged with ineffectiveness, wastefulness, inhumaneness, and nonresponsiveness. It is alleged that children are not learning even the most elementary skills, that students graduate in large numbers unable to read, that many schools are literally out of control, wrecked with violence, vandalism, drugs, and extortion rackets. It is alleged further that there are high rates of absenteeism among students and teachers alike, that

effective systems of pupil and teacher evaluation are non-existent, and that the co-existence of federal, state, and locally planned, designed and financed programs has produced conditions of near non-manageability. It is alleged too that mandated desegregation/integration of schools has placed exceptionally heavy stresses and strains on already beleagured governance and management systems. I emphasize that these are allegations and have been so for nearly two decades. No one including school system governance and managers really knows fully and comprehensively the status of educational health in urban places.

As we assemble here in Los Angeles in the Autumn of 1976, we can predict that the effectiveness of urban schools will not improve substantially during the next two decades. Some systems will deteriorate dramatically; some will remain about as they are now; and some will improve marginally. But there will not be dramatic improvements certainly not of the scope and pedagogical significance to affect constructively the life chances of large numbers of children and youth.

The systems are controlled by policies and administrative directives that emanate from federal, state, regional and local legislative and administrative sources. Monies essential to their maintenance issue from the same places. The impacting decisions are about finance and personnel; and most of those are essentially out of the clients reach, especially the poor of our cities. Critical finance decisions are made by the Congress of the United States, state legislatures, and to limited extent by boards of education. Powerful forces impact on those decisions at state and federal levels. At the district level the basic financial, allocative decisions are made through collective bargaining. Bargaining occurs out of public view, with no potential for client participation.[11] To complicate matters further, the day-to-day learning experiences of children

and youth are affected by at least two, possibly three, internal, competitive, (if not contentious) overlapping authority systems. Parents, citizens, and students seek (and sometimes succeed) in impacting upon policy and operational decisions through traditional and emergent forms of citizen involvement.

The impotence of policy makers and managers extends beyond the education community. The paralysis marks most city governments, especially those divisions that are responsible for human services. The mayors and councils of cities, try as they may, are hardly holding their own in their encounter with complexity. Inertia is everywhere. Accountability is nearly non-existent. The layering of decision making and diffusion/confusion which surrounds authority and responsibility produce immobility or charitably labeled at times, checks and balances. These conditions are not new. Their tenure extends across at least two decades; and tragically there is nothing in prospect to assure better conditions in the future.

PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP

Proactive leadership is required to assure educational opportunity, constructed upon the companion principles of equity and quality. Proactive leadership is aggressive, initiatory, and above all well informed. The leadership component for educational purposes requires both professional and lay leaders in good balance. The leaders from the professional community must posses extensive knowledge and skills drawn from formal education and experiential sources. Chester I. Barnard nearly forty years ago wrote a near classic volume titled The Functions of the Executive.[12] His book found its way slowly into the libraries of students of administration, sometimes into their minds. He observed that "The strategic factor in dynamic expression of leadership is moral creativeness, which precedes, but is in turn dependent upon, technological proficiency and the development of techniques in relation to it."[12] He argued

that the strategic factor in cooperation generally is leadership. He defines leadership as a relatively high personal capacity for both technological attainments and moral complexity, combined with propensity for consistency in conformance to moral factors of the individual.[13]

The school superintendent stands at the apex, the very top of a power pyramid. Larry Cuban concluded recently that big-city superintendents have a very narrow boundary within which they as individuals can exercise leadership.[14] He observes however, that big-city superintendents who are aware of the narrow margin of leadership available to them as executive of massive organizations may well be able to parlay the multiple, conflicting roles into a leadership constellation that delivers both symbolic and real gains.[15] I would add that lay leaders function within similarly limited boundaries.

It is these limits, boundaries, zones, leverage potentials that are my concern. They are both real and imagined, limiting and liberating, depending upon how leaders conceptualize their roles and adjust their psyches relative to those boundaries. Barnard, those many years ago, noted that it was impossible to endure a high degree of moral complexity without commensurate technological proficiency.[16] Barnard observed that: . . . neither man of weak responsibility nor those of limited capability can endure or carry the burden of many simultaneous obligations of different types. If they are 'overloaded', either ability, responsibility, or morality, or all three, will be destroyed. Conversely, a condition of complex morality, great activity, and high responsibility cannot continue without commensurate ability.[17]

The proposals which follow regarding third parties and decision seminars are mechanisms through which moral complexity and technical proficiency can be achieved. The initial step is to put in place theory and practice in their regard in a setting which is directed to and has respect for proactive leadership.

Professional leadership for education, at the very top, is composed of persons who have come up through the ranks by and large. Most of their experience while on the career ladder has been intra-organizational. Their experiential frames of reference have been essentially within the system or in-house. Their interface with the community and the society have been at the edges, not at the core. Upon elevation to the superintendency they are propelled out of their cocoons; their interface with the community and the society is the core, the organization is at the edges.

Lay leaders, school board members for example, reflect the community and the society at the core, the organization at the edges. They struggle to understand the institution; in the process they risk losing their grasp of, sometimes their commitment to, the community. The reverse risk is present for the superintendent.

The complexity, the impotence, the overwhelmingness, the thin rationality that overlays essentially out of control educational enterprises are the objects of my appeal for new governance and managerial constructs within which to exercise the limits of leadership. The third party, problem solving citizens committee is one such construct. Allow me to describe the concept and some of the national experience with it.

THIRD PARTY PROBLEM SOLVING GROUPS

A proactive exhibit of leadership is the establishment of third party, citizen, problem solving groups. Third parties offer substantial leverage. They can reconfigure the landscape, alter the field of forces, achieve cooperation, and build coalitions. They can take initiatives, overcome inertia within institutions that they are designed to help and bridge across institutions that have substantial stakes in one another's activities. They are both more than and less than governments. They are macro and over arching; they are

mediating and interstitial. They are very advanced forms of citizen involvement. They are theoretically capable of utilizing knowledge and information more effectively than constitutionally and legally established governance or management structures now in place. But they can neither govern nor can they manage an institution.

Third parties are not new in the educational institution arena. The roots of citizen involvement in education extend deeply into the European settlements in New England and the Middle Altantic colonies. The emergence of local school boards began in Massachusetts as a spinoff of the village and town selectmen. Titled school committees in Massachusetts even today, they are more often known as school boards. By whatever title, they are the citizens' legal representatives for public education.[18] And as such, they carry a severe public burden. Few citizens actually understand the scope or magnitude of board members' responsibilities.

Citizen involvement in education has taken many forms over the years. Some citizens limit their participation to school board elections or tax rate referenda. Others "put in their time" as PTA members or chaperones at school affairs. Still others accept membership on a myriad of citizen committees. Citizen committees named by school authorities, up until recently, were essentially study groups or political instruments of school officials. They were asked to help pass a bond issue, review textbooks, or support a change in school program.

It wasn't until the mid 1960's that school authorities began to look differently upon citizen involvement. And then their views were often modified only under duress. Federal policy and the increasingly grievous local educational problems were key factors in the change of attitude. Federally financed Title I programs for example mandate building level and district-wide advisory committees. Since many federal programs include this requirement,

school officials need not have thought that they were the only targets of federal directive. The growing seriousness of local problems provoked many school systems to reach out for additional citizen help, resulting in an extensive panoply of district sponsored citizen advisory structures.

Despite the large scale frustration and uncertainty about the effectiveness of citizen involvement (whether or not it makes any difference) the facts are that large numbers of citizens have given time and energy to school improvement, to changing what schools are about, even to the removal of school superintendents, principals, teachers, and school board members.

The "Royal Commission" Model

A widely known and practiced model of citizen involvement at the institutional level is the "Royal Commission". It is the British approach, widely used in Britain, other northern European countries, Canada, and frequently in the United States at the federal, state, and school district levels. Normally such groups have elite memberships, generous funding, professional staffs, and well paid consultants. They produce thick reports saturated with recommendations.

There are three types of "Royal Commissions" essentially, with some permutations. One is governmentally established and sanctioned, but given independence to conduct its work; a second is an externally initiated body which proceeds independently but seeks the sufferance of governments and/or institutions; a third is a shared or joint sponsorship (school district - community organization) or an institutional appraisal leading to recommendations for change. There are more examples of the first than the latter two. Each usually falls far short of its expected effectiveness especially if problem solving has been a desired outcome. Most "Commissions" produce reports based upon varying patterns of investigation. It is common to employ staff and

consultants to prepare reports ultimately bearing the imprimatur of the Commisssion members. Upon completion the documents are delivered formally to appropriate public officials and disseminated to other interested audiences.

A flurry of publicity often accompanies the naming of Commissions and issuance of their reports. Usually the Commissions are disbanded soon after the appearances of their major study documents. And no one, save beleaguered public officials, are in place to see that their ponderous contents are examined, their recommendations implemented.

It is important to understand the difference that exist among the three general categories of community activity since attitudes toward outcomes appear to differ directly with the nature of Commission sponsorship and their financing. The work of school district initiated and financed groups may be better received and their recommendations more thoroughly implemented than those of groups initiated outside of the system and under external sponsorship. That is not to say that all school district sponsored groups are warmly received nor that their recommendations are implemented without resistance or misgivings. Nor is it to say that the work of all externally sponsored Commissions is rejected out of hand. Most people, including professional educators, dislike others telling them what they ought to be doing. The psychological impact of "being told" for those who serve in school districts is different depending upon the source of energy leading to the "telling". It seems to be more difficult for professionals to ignore recommendations that issue from district authorized and financed inquiry (which have the support of school officials including board members) than recommendations produced by an external group of the Commision type.

Third party problem solving groups differ markedly from "Royal Commissions" in theory, philosophy, objective, and how they proceed, and their sources of

legitimacy.

What are "Third Parties"?

Several terms are used almost interchangeably to identify the functions that citizens groups can perform when they are devoted to problem solving. Third force and third sector convey essentially the same meanings as third party. Third party activity is widespread in our society.[19] It occurs as a part of our judicial system; it is at the heart of labor negotiations; it is essential to international affairs; it is increasingly invoked in disputes between husbands and wives; and it is employed in many other arenas of existing or potential conflict. In labor/management relationships third party roles are formal and reasonably well understood. Mediator, conciliator, arbitrator, and fact finder are formal roles. Skilled persons occupy them. They have become professionalized and individuals devote their lives to those careers. Furthermore, they are so specialized that persons can and do charge generous fees for their services.

International relationships throughout man's history have involved third parties to ease tensions or to avoid open conflict, warfare, embargo, or other forms of settling differences between nations. In recent history Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger has become a self-styled third party, jetting around the globe "doing his thing". The United Nations is often a third party, less effective than most would like, but nevertheless an intervenor. World respected statesmen such as Winstron Churchill, Dag Hammarskjold, and Franklin Roosevelt have served as third parties as have Soviet leaders, especially within the communist bloc.

The Courts are charged with various forms of third party activity. It is their job. The Courts are involved in extreme labor/management disputes. There are family relations and domestic relations Courts. More recently the

Courts have become involved in school desegregation and integration problems. The Courts, and more specifically the judges who "order" actions to be taken not only intervene, mediate, and audit progress, they on rare occasions administer; or if they do not administer directly, the delegate the ministerial function to an authority that they identify. Judge Arthur Garrity's designation of a "receiver" for South Boston High School in 1975 is a good example.

It is worth noting in passing that third party activity is both formal and informal, public and non-public, reported and unreported. Formal third party activity is legitimized and publicly acceptable at a general level. That is, it is legal, sanctioned by tradition, acceptable to most people as a form of conflict resolution or problem solving. It is public, often open, certainly not clandestine. Informal third party activity is not necessarily public especially in delicate international matters or domestic relations problems. Informal third party activity is often spontaneous and there are few if any broadly shared prior specifications -- legal or otherwise -- which surround the intervenor's authority or activity. The services of a third party can be invoked from any of several quarters, can be as simple as carrying a message or as involved as the work of Henry Kissinger convening individuals and groups over time in various parts of the world. Kissinger's goal ostensibly is to achieve an acceptable state of affairs among nations. At a more familiar level for most people a friend can be asked to convene husband and wife, parents and children, or next door neighbors to settle matters at issue. The friend intervenes, fact finds, mediates, conciliates, and hopefully achieves an acceptable state of affairs among family members.

Third party activity in education (setting aside labor relations) has many of the same attributes of third party forms described above, but differs chiefly in the specification of the other parties. Many of the functions and

strategies are the same. If one is a third party, who are the other two? Most third party activities imply intervention between two other parties, i.e., labor and mangement, husband and wife, Israel and Egypt. An education problem solving citizens group may serve many individuals, many groups, many constituencies. The third party in some respects negotiates the public interest among boards of education, school employees especially top school administrators, students, parents, citizens, the state, even federal interests. Such citizens groups occupy privileged terrain and because of their power and influence must proceed responsibly. Their accountability is often questioned and rightfully so, since their memberships are not democratically determined. Their sponsorships, too, are sometimes obscure at least to the average citizen and the impace of their existence on many matters is not in full view nor is it easily traced.

The success of third parties turns on the power and legitimacy they possess or can earn. Their power and legitimation may come from several sources. One is from the institutions they are expected to serve. Another is from other levels and units of government. Still another is from individuals and groups who are aware of the seriousness of an institution's difficulties and support the creation of a special group charged with problem solving; and as their work proceeds, the media's support becomes important.

Why a Third Party?

Third parties are invoked when established institutions are thought to be failing. The admission of failure on the part of a school board or a city council, a school superintendent or a mayor, is a serious admission.

It is unfortunate that the search for help is attached to evidence of weakness. In fact, the reverse may be true. It may be that the enlightened able public officials are those who enlist the community or their constituents in a concerted approach to problem solving. The accountability for finding

answers to broad, involved public problems spreads across the public landscape. It is unreasonable in these times to expect that elected or appointed policy makers will possess the knowledge or wisdom to find their way through excessively involved contemporary problems. Similarly it is unrealistic to expect that professionals will, by themselves, produce answers.

Thus, it seems prudent and wise to solicit help from the sources of knowledge, energy, and wisdom, that are extant in the community; and that is what third parties as problem solvers are all about. It is a search for a catalyst, a release, an integration of the unlimited energies that reside within the human community.

It does not diminish the worth of what is in place. It does not demean. It does not defile. It does not denigrate. It does not misunderstand.

A third party does respect the legacy of the past, the efforts of the dedicated. It builds upon that legacy and refines its contribution; and it rises above those successes to integrate new energies, new wisdoms, new persons on an assault upon problems, in the public interest.

Strategies and Functions of Third Parties

To actually solve problems, a number of sub-functions or strategies are employed.

Leading. Leading is implicit in some of the other functions described. Convening, linking, catalyzing are leadership acts involving initiation. Third parties as problem solvers are leadership groups. They are given room to move, turf to occupy, resources to apply. They move in on uncertainty and confusion. They mobilize energy, they capture attention, they direct and re-direct. And they do so under privileged circumstances including the opportunity to apply rational approaches to problem solving.

Convening. Convening is an assembly of people who in the absence of a third party are not likely to meet. Their assembly is an initiative, often in regard to problematic circumstances and is essential to solving a problem. Convening is an exercise of leadership. Inherent in convening is an enormous power potential. Assembly of Detroit leaders to prevent a teachers' strike is an illustration.

Accessing. Accessing is an action available to third parties. It involves the location and application of ideas, human resources, even dollar resources to problems which ordinarily would escape the purview or be unavailable to established school authorities. The Advisory Committee from Higher Education established by the Detroit Education Task Force is a good example.

Mediating. Today's problems are often saturated with emotion and conflict. Parties to such difference are unable to reach a satisfactory resolution. When such conflict occurs in areas of problem interest to third parties, mediation may be required to facilitate the work of the citizens group. The Dallas Alliance mediated many differences in the development of a satisfactory desegregation plan.

Linking. There are many examples of disjunctiveness in modern communities. School board members and superintendents in the past were often able to communicate across many segments of the community. This was especially true among elites. Today school officials are often less able to sustain such communication even if they are able to establish it in the first place. The Columbus group was knitting major segments of the metropolitan area into a loose confederation in an attempt to affect a peaceful and constructive response to an anticipated Court order.

Proxying. Third parties and their members can on occasion serve as proxies for school authorities. The proxying function is similar to but not the same as the linking function. It calls for the group or individuals to stand in the place of others, in this case school boards or their individual members and school administrators. Leaders of the Detroit Education Task Force in solving the 1972-73 fiscal crisis of the Detroit Public Schools "stood in" for school leaders in negotiations in Lansing. At other times and under other circumstances school officials could have handled such matters themselves. Not so in this case.

Catalyzing. Problematic conditions are often marked by inertia, confusion, lack of direction, often despair. A third force or party can be a catalyst, an external agent, a motivator. Sometimes it takes little more than a nudge to get things off dead center. The Education Committee of the Detroit Task Force was the agent for intensive review of teacher preparation at Wayne State and Michigan State Universities.

Reporting. Many communities distrust the information they receive from school sources. An objective, impartial third party can assemble and disseminate information that will be believed, at least as long as third parties retain their credibility. Thus, an efficient and sustained reporting capability is essential to third party work. The San Francisco Public Schools Commission employed a full-time staff person to guide and direct the Commission's reporting activity.

Implementing. Implementing is the function that distinguishes problem solving groups from other citizen bodies. It is an exceptionally difficult part of problem solving. It requires very close colloboration with school officials even to the point of working day after day inside the school system with school personnel. Implementation requires patience, understanding, and adjustments on the part of citizens and school people if it is to occur.

The functions above are described as if they are discrete, independent activities. It is useful to set them apart for the purpose of analysis, recognizing that in the maelstrom of problem solving they lose their independence. For example, an act of reporting may turn out to be a catalyst to portions of the education community. As it impacts constructively on human events, it may be seen as an important act of leadership. Convening persons who ordinarily would not assemble or collectively confront a problem (about which each has an independent stake) often has important byproducts. A convening can achieve leadership, mediation, reporting, linking, accessing, in fact most of the sub-functions of third party problem solving.

Third Party Effectiveness as Problem Solvers

The work of third party problem solvers is different than the day-to-day work of school board members and administrators. Third party work is at one and the same time more simple and more complex. It is simpler because citizens do not have the weight of institutional operation on their hands. They can be more reflective, more objective. They can proceed more rationally; they have more time. Their work is more complex because they are "outside" the specific system where the problems are. They encounter political problems in their work before they bring recommendations to a school district. And since their obligation carries with it participation in implementation, they encounter "within system" political problems of a different sort when they work at implementation.

There are nearly classic stages to problem solving. In one way or another third parties pass through them all even to investing substantial attention to monitoring their handiwork. Considerable time is invested in locating the most important problem arenas, in isolating the issues, in defining the problems. All problem solvers quite properly want to make sure that they know

what is at issue, what is the problem before proceeding. In Detroit, San Francisco, and St. Louis, where problems of education, of teaching and learning, fell within the third party problem net, it took many months to decide what the educational problems really were. Once defined it took additional time to prioritize them, to determine which were the most important, and which should be attacked first.

For example, pupil achievement was very low in San Francisco as measured by conventional achievement tests. Test results were getting worse even in the face of rapidly growing expenditures per pupil, very desirable teacher-pupil ratios, and substantial special program monies from state and federal sources. What is the problem? Is it low achieving pupils? Is it inadequately prepared teachers? Is it poor administration? Is it lack of parent support? Is it poorly constructed tests that fail to capture what children really know? Is it a poorly conceived curriculum embedded in an unsatisfactory pattern of grade organization? Is it the incongruence between the racial/ethnic/cultural attributes of the students enrolled and the professional work force? Is it a combination of the above, or none of the above?

The Commision pondered these questions for weeks, gathered information, held hearing with school personnel and interested citizens. The problem to be solved in their judgment was the absence of a reliable district-wide appraisal system and their solution was the design, development, testing, and installation of a school evaluation profile. Many months will be needed before the system is in place. But when functioning fully the San Francisco Unified School District will not only have an appraisal tool but also an instrument for improvement. The school evaluation profile consists of several indices each of which is a leverage point for change. Profile indices are to be determined at three-year intervals allowing adequate time for the students, staff,

parents, principal and others to make improvements.

It required a third party to intervene in the San Francisco schools situation to strike common cause with diverse but interested parties in order to acquire a system wide appraisal capability.

THE DECISION SEMINAR

Another systematic approach to the management and governance of urban education is the decision seminar. The decision seminar is a flexible tool available to lay and professional leaders. It is congenial to but has not been employed in third party activity. The theory which supports the seminar is comprehensive and thorough. Harold D. Lasswell is its principal architect.[21]

The seminar is a disciplined structure for the analysis of problems and the projection of alternatives in their regard. It lends itself to planning, problem solving, even leadership development objectives. It has been utilized in many settings, including large city school systems. It has never reached its full potential in field tests essentially because its potential is so far-reaching and the fact that it places extraordinarily severe demands upon those who use it. It is in the minds of many, a way station en route to the establishment of social planetaria. A social planetarium is the most advanced form available to citizens and public officials for bringing what is known to bear upon public issues and public problems. The planetarium would be a physical location constructed on the basis of principles drawn from the physical and social sciences. It would reflect understandings of communities in its architecture; and it would incorporate the most advanced forms of knowledge and information storage, retrieval, display and diffusion technologies.

The decision seminar employs rigorous concepts in the analysis of complex problems within a physical setting consistent with sound learning theory. The goals of a decision seminar now being considered in a large

midwestern city are as follow:

- To foster and develop improved institutional problem solving and planning capability for the school system.
- To supplement the knowledge and experience of participants through a shared set of analytical procedures and a continuing input of data and information.
- To construct an analytical framework through which participants can integrate day-to-day problems into larger contextual "maps" critical for understanding longer range planning and policy development.
- To establish information-gathering and evaluation systems combining institutional and cross-institutional resources to serve as "early warning" problem sensory devices and for appraising dysfunctional policies; i.e., as an anticipatory capacity for problem-solving.
- To increase the capacity of the school system to share with the community the full range of problems, and to expand the evidentiary base used for promoting and invoking policies designed to solve problems.
- To foster and develop community input to the school system for problem definition and problem-solving through an accessible, procedurally-based, convening format.
- To improve the quality of the public educational delivery system for the young people of Metro City.[22]

The seminar requires resources and conditions conducive to problem solving: One of these is a permanent, special location referred to above. Audio-visual backup, special forms of record keeping, outside experts, research support, and a permanent core membership are essential. Three other essentials are worth noting. One is shared devotion to problem solving by its membership, another contextuality, and a third continuity.

With such features in place, an analytic sequence is employed which includes essentially the near classic elements of problem solving process: (1) goal clarification; (2) trend description; (3) analysis of conditions; (4) projection of developments; and (5) invention, evaluation, and selection of alternatives. These five elements represent the past, present, and future dimensions of a problem. They also require seminar members to consider seven

broad classes of information as problems are considered. Those classes of information are the stakeholders, their perspectives, the situations in which key participants in problems interact, the base values people employ, the strategies they devise, the outcomes sought and obtained, and the effects of participants behaviors.

Through the assistance of Ohio State University a "Superintendents Issues Seminar" was established in Detroit in 1974. It was designed on the basis of a prior year's work in Columbus utilizing Harold Lasswell's concept of the decision seminar. After two years of Detroit experience, it appears that the system's leadership is on the threshold of an important new teaching, learning, staff development and planning tool.

The Decision Seminar on the problems of the Detroit Public Schools held at Ohio State during 1973-74 was of substantial importance to the work of Education Task Force in Detroit. Harold Lasswell and Richard Snyder were key figures in the development of the seminar as was Larry Slonaker, a specialist in communications theory and technology. The seminar was conducted in a specially developed, data saturated, "map and strategy" room. Tracks were suspended from the ceiling which allowed the display of data about Michigan, the SMSA, the City of Detroit, and the Detroit Public School System. A "decision cake" was placed in the center of the room as a mechanism for displaying Lasswell's social process, problem-solving model. The content for the seminar was the problems and issues confronting the Detroit Public Schools. The analysis of the issues was displayed before seminar participants on the "decision cake."

Seminar participants were immersed in information about the total environment of Detroit. They were made aware simultaneously of economic, demographic, and educational data significant to problem solving in Detroit. Goals were

displayed that have been adopted for city school district, southeastern Michigan, and State of Michigan purposes. Participants learned about the properties of data, especially the affective quality of data, the misleading nature of certain kinds of data, the difficulty of synthesizing and integrating complex data from many sectors, each of which has significance in its own terms for a particular policy or decision before the Board of Education.

The Superintendents Issues Seminar in Detroit focused on the transcendent over-arching, meta, large-scale issues confronting the schools. The first issue was retrenchment: the no-growth society, zero population growth, declining enrollments in the public schools, plateauing tax bases within the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan, declining levels of employment, the unemployability of young persons within the school district, and the meaning of a fatiguing, declining, constraining, contracting environment for the schools. The implications of these circumstances for personnel, programs, use of school facilities, and finance were under consideration.

The decision seminar is systematic and powerful. Its leaders must be trained to utilize it effectively. Although requiring discipline, it is adaptable and can be employed as widely varying contexts and situations.

CONCLUSION

The third party citizen groups and the decision seminar mechanisms, independently or in combination, are powerful leadership tools. They lend themselves to the transcendent inter or intra institutional problems. They are particularly congenial to the achievement of some of the needs that Willard Wirtz identified in his new book The Boundless Resource.[23] He argues that we need a fresh education-work policy which calls for the realigning of established institutional sovereignties. He notes that it will depend upon activating and reactivating the public's interest. Wirtz comments

further that:

> The most difficult element in formulating such a strategy is that there is no readily identifiable spearhead for it, no single center of responsibility. The changes that need to be made can't be brought together in a single legislative proposal, even an omnibus bill. The undertaking will have to be at the local and state as well as federal level, engaging both public and private institutions, enlisting the society's membership as well as its leadership.[24]

Applying the seminar through third party groups to education and work is only a first step. It might well be applied to the problems of youth incorporating cross sector policy analysis and the invention of new ways to conceive of the public's responsibility to children and youth. It is a proper vehicle for achieving Mary Parker Follet's "creative experience."[25] The third party and the decision seminar are instruments through which public learning can be achieved, initially for top leaders, later for increasing numbers of the citizenry at large.

Problem solving is a comfortable activity for Americans. We are a pragmatic people and problems are our cup of tea. We display an attractive impatience, a desire to get to the root of things, to take appropriate actions, and move on to the next challenge. So it is with problem solving citizens groups, except that the problems thus far do not yield easily even to the best of intention, the finest intelligence, the most committed leadership. We must apply more systematic approaches in my judgment such as those suggested.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a brief description of problem solving, citizen committees as third parties see Luvern L. Cunningham, "New Forms of Involving Citizens in Educational Systems." In The Delivery of Urban Services, edited by Elinor Ostrom. (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1976).

2. There is rather widespread public discomfort with social science and social scientists. On occasion scholars are invited (or drift) into "real world" responsibilities which permit them to link the knowledge producers with the knowledge users. The experience is usually devastating to the social scientist's self esteem. Sarason has pointed to the values that reside in social action as vehicles for learning and urges that social scientists become more fundamentally engaged with several phenomena under investigation. See Seymour B. Sarason, The Psychological Sense of Community (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1974). Chapter X.

3. Amitai Etzioni, The Active Society. (New York: The Free Press, 1968) p. 155.

4. Harland Cleveland, The Future Executive. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972). Chapter I.

5. Luvern L. Cunningham, "Closing the Nation Down for Educational Problem Solving." Governing Schools: New Approaches to Old Issues. (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company. 1971).

6. Harold D. Lasswell. A Pre-View of the Policy Sciences (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Company, Inc., 1971).

7. A brief summary of the general theory which supports the decision seminar appears on Harold D. Lasswell and Allan R. Holmberg "Toward a General Theory of Directed Value Accumulation and Institutional Development" in Political and Administrative Development, ed. Ralph Braibanti (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1969) pp. 354-399.

8. Ibid. p. 392.

9. John Dewey. The Public and Its Problems. (Denver: Alan Swallow[19], published originally by Henry Holt and Company, 1927). p. 208.

10. A current commentary on the problems of governance and management of a city system appears in Joseph M. Cronin, Luvern L. Cunningham, David S. Seeley, and Josh Smith. Improving Boston Education (Special Report to Mayor Kevin White, August 1976).

11. The political significance of the sheltered almost clandestine nature of bargaining is described by Wellington and Winter. See Harry H. Wellington and Ralph K. Winter, Jr. The Unions and the Cities. (Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 1971). Chapter IX.

12. Chester I. Barnard. The Functions of the Executive. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962. p. 288

13. Ibid.

14. Larry Cuban. Urban School Chiefs Under Fire (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). pp. 170-171.

15. Ibid.

16. Barnard Op. Cit. pp. 272-273.

17. Ibid. p. 272.

18. For a comprehensive review of the functions and responsibilities of local school boards see Raphael O. Nystrand and Luvern L. Cunningham. The Dynamics of Local School Control. (Washington, D. C.: Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare/Office of Education. 1973). 44 p.

19. There are many examples of non-education related third party or third sector groups described in Judith Getzels, Peter Elliot, and Frank Beal. Private Planning for the Public Interest. (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1975).

20. The functions described are more fully reported in a recent report to the U. S. Office of Education. That document also contains a summary of the achievements of third parties. Lawrence L. Slonaker and Philip M. Burgess. Contextuality, Continuity, and Purpose: Using the Decision Seminar for Problem Solving. (Columbus: The Mershon Center, The Ohio State University, 1975).

21. Lasswell. Op. Cit.

22. The goals statement is drawn from Lawrence L. Slonaker. A Briefing Report on the Decision Seminar. (Columbus: Mershon Center, The Ohio State University, 1975). p. 42.

23. Willard Wirtz. The Boundless Resource (Washington, D. C.: The New Republic Book Company, Inc. 1975).

24. Ibid. p. 169